

July 22, 2008

OBEY COMMENTS ON FIRST HAND VIEW OF SITUATION IN IRAQ

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) returned from Iraq today and had these comments on the situation there:



Gen. David Petraeus, above right, the top U.S. commander in Iraq, and U.S. Amb. Ryan Crocker, 2nd from left, are seen with Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) during a meeting.

(U.S. Army Photo / SSG Lorie Jewel)

"Two things that have happened in the last two weeks show that we have been right to try to set a timeline with a reasonable goal for ending our combat role in Iraq.

“The first is that, after vetoing my bill last year and blocking my bill this year that would have established a reasonable goal for the withdrawal of U.S. forces from combat in Iraq, the Bush Administration itself has now started talking about a ‘timeline horizon’, which is simply a rhetorical way of claiming to be different while finally buying into our approach. As we’ve argued, until we agree to set at least a timeline with a reasonable

goal we leave ourselves open to the effective recruiting claim by our enemies in the region that we intend to remain in Iraq forever. And with the ongoing construction of an embassy in Bagdad that’s ten times larger than an average U.S. embassy, it’s not a hard charge for people to believe.

“The Second development is that now even Iraqi Prime Minister al-Maliki is comfortable with Senator Obama’s suggestion of a timeline that has, as its goal, U.S. forces withdrawn from combat over a 16-month period. Last week, al-Maliki told the German newsmagazine Der Spiegel ‘. . . we think that this period might increase or decrease a little, but that it might be suitable to end the presence of the forces in Iraq.’ And a top official in al-Maliki’s Dawa party told the Washington Post that ‘Obama is closer to Iraqi opinion on the issue of withdrawal of U.S. forces.’

“The Administration can do all it wants to try to browbeat al-Maliki into changing his comments, but in fact, his comments, which were repeated yesterday, show that the people who are out of sync are not those of us who are calling for a reasonable goal for withdrawal, but the administration that is pretending that you can handle this situation without setting a goal.

“Five and a half years after this war began, it’s time to recognize that fact. Nothing that I saw on my trip to Iraq this week has changed that.”

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